

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



No 266 28 November 2013 30p/80p

www.workersliberty.org

For a workers' government

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**15,000 marched
on 24 November to
save Lewisham A&E
and maternity.**

What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production. Society is shaped by the capitalists' relentless drive to increase their wealth. Capitalism causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.



Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class has one weapon: solidarity.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty aims to build solidarity through struggle so that the working class can overthrow capitalism. We want socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for the labour movement to break with "social partnership" and assert working-class interests militantly against the bosses.

Our priority is to work in the workplaces and trade unions, supporting workers' struggles, producing workplace bulletins, helping organise rank-and-file groups.

We are also active among students and in many campaigns and alliances.

We stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. Free abortion on request. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.
- If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

Contact us:

● 020 7394 8923 ● solidarity@workersliberty.org

The editor (Cathy Nugent), 20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG.

● Printed by Trinity Mirror

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How to tax TNCs

By Martin Thomas

Law professor Sol Picciotto has proposed a new approach to stop tax avoidance by transnational corporations (TNCs).

Over a third of all world trade is within TNCs. That gives them enormous scope to manage their affairs so that their profits appear, and are taxed, in the lowest-tax parts of the world.

Starbucks, Google, and Amazon all use this scope so as to pay very little tax in the UK.

Socialists object to this; and so do ordinary capitalist governments. There have been many efforts by governments, since the 1930s,

to fix the problem, none of them effective.

Picciotto bases himself on what has been "applied by California, for example to prevent Hollywood film companies from siphoning profits through distribution affiliates set up in neighbouring Nevada..."

Each transnational corporation should have to draw up a single worldwide set of accounts for its whole business. An agreed formula, based on assets, payroll, and sales figures country-by-country, would then determine the percentage of the TNC's operations attributed to each country it operates in.

Tax on the TNC in each country would be based on its worldwide accounts and

the percentage of its operations attributed to the country.

Picciotto points out: "Despite the high costs of separate accounting [for each of their country-by-country operations], most TNCs seem to prefer it. The main reason undoubtedly is that it allows them freedom to organise their internal structure, and generally to deal with national tax administrations one-on-one... the ability to exploit the opportunities for international tax avoidance, especially through the tax haven and offshore secrecy system".

Picciotto's scheme is certainly workable, because it is based on what happens between states in the USA. That current political reali-

ties give it little chance of being implemented signals the enormous power of the TNCs.

As is documented in detail in a new book by Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, *The Making of Global Capitalism*, capitalist globalisation depends heavily on action by states. When TNCs are in trouble — like the big US car firms, and many international banks, in 2008 — they turn to their home states for bail-outs.

But the priority for capitalist states, more and more, is to shape their countries so as to be able to attract activity from a world market dominated by TNCs.

● bit.ly/picciotto

CBI calls for end to "exam factories"

By Rob Fox

The CBI has attacked the current regime of testing children, calling some secondary schools "exam factories".

This, coming from the high table of the British bourgeoisie, highlights the absurdity of over-examining school pupils.

Naturally, the reasons given by the CBI were terrible: "Qualifications are im-

portant, but we also need people who have self-discipline and serve customers well", said the CBI director general, adding that measuring attainment by criteria beyond test scores might boost economic growth!

As socialists we measure the quality of education not by its effect on profits or by competitive examinations but the extent to which it enriches the lives of people.

National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts annual conference

Saturday 8 December — Sunday 9 December,
Birmingham University Guild of Students

More: on.fb.me/Ts7f0z

Turkish trade unionists support Bob Carnegie campaign

UID-DER, a rank-and-file caucus within the Turkish labour movement, has spoken out against the victimisation of Australian union activist Bob Carnegie.

They have sent a letter of protest to David Saxelby, the boss of Abigroup (the construction company taking the legal case against

him).

UID-DER were prominent international supporters of the Queensland Children's Hospital strike, for his role in which Bob is now under attack. They wrote at the time: "As your class brothers/sisters in Turkey we know well that construction workers work under hard conditions, and that there are many diffi-

culties for workers to get organised in this industry. The system of sub-contracting is becoming widespread across the world [...] Therefore your struggle to sign contract with the main company and get equal pay for equal work is especially important and significant."

In Australia, the Melbourne University branch

of the National Tertiary Education Union passed a motion backing Bob's campaign, and in Britain, the Leeds branch of the Labour Representation Committee backed the campaign, as did Unite Grassroots Left.

For more information, see bobcarnegiedefence.wordpress.com

Young Labour stitch up

Under-27 Labour activists can get to the next conference, in Leicester on 2-3 March 2013, only by becoming a delegate from an entire region (London, the South West, whatever), or a national trade union — or a university Labour Club.

The university Labour Clubs are weak, but more right-wing than Young Labour. Each Labour Club can send delegates, but now no local Labour Party or Young Labour group can.

Nominations for national positions in Young Labour close on 19 December, and the ballot for them will be between 21 January and 21 February.

● Conference site: younglabour.org.uk/youthconference2013

By Michael Elms

Over the last couple of years, Young Labour — set up in 1993 to replace the old Labour youth wing wound up to get rid of Militant (now the Socialist Party) — has begun to show a little spark and crackle.

Labour's apparatchiks have responded by reshaping Young Labour annual conference to make it harder for dissent to be heard.

Factory fire deaths: this was murder

By Dave Kirk

At least 112 workers were killed in the fire on 24 November at the Tazreen Fashions garment factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Every year dozens are killed in such fires. They are murdered by a venal system overseen by culpable individuals.

The mainly women workers were caught out when a fire broke out on the ground floor of the factory. There were no emergency exits. Some workers jumped out of windows to their deaths. Rescue workers have found many unrecognisable bodies; families will not even be able to bury their dead relatives.

At least 3.5 million workers across over 4,000 factories work in Bangladesh's garment industry. They often work up to 14-16 hour days. The garments are mainly sold to retailers in the west including Walmart (Asda), Primark, Tesco and the Arcadia group.

The owners of this factory and others, and the ruling class politicians, have tolerated wilful violations of poorly enforced safety and health and conditions. They have not acted after previous incidents and need to be held to account for these deaths.

The major western brands say they inspect the factories and want to

improve conditions. However their inspections are often announced. Cosmetic changes are made and factories "pass".

If a t-shirt cost £3 in British shops, you can imagine how little goes to workers' wages, or maintaining safety standards.

The board of Tesco, Walmart, Primark and Arcadia are well aware of the conditions within the factories and the deaths in factory fires in Bangladesh and other countries like Pakistan. They would rather continue to extract vast profits so they turn a blind eye; they have blood on their hands.

Unions like the National Garment Workers Federation are organising mainly women workers for better pay and conditions and has led strikes. We must give practical solidarity to these workers and aid their fight.

We also have a duty to hold the blood-drenched directors of major retailers to account.

Our best strategy is to organise UK shopworkers and distribution workers to fight for their own pay and conditions and fight with their brother and sister workers throughout the distribution chain to build solidarity.

To stop such atrocities, the only sane thing to do is overthrow the murderous rule of profit and institute the international rule of the working class.

Assad clings to power

By Dan Katz

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights report at least 40,000 people have died, including 28,000 civilians, since the start of the uprising against the one-party Baath dictatorship, which began in March 2012.

2.5 million of Syria's population of 23 million people are now displaced, many internally. The number of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries has nearly doubled since the beginning of September to more than 440,000.

Inflation is now officially around 40%, year-on-year, and the value of the Syrian pound has fallen by 65% against the dollar over the last 20 months.

In an effort to stabilise support, Finance Minister Mohammad Juleilati has announced a 13% rise in public sector salaries and a 25% increase in subsidies on food, fuel and power.

However, industrial production has ground to a halt and tourist revenue has ended; Western sanctions are preventing the sale of

much of the north of the country in a single, contiguous territory.

On Thursday 22 November, the Mayadeen military base in the east, near Deir Ezzor, also fell to the opposition after a three-week long siege.

This area is the country's main oil and gas producing region. A large area of territory running up to the Iraq border is now in rebel hands.

KURDS

In the north east of Syria, where Syria's Kurds are a majority, the regime appears to have abandoned the area to the PKK.

The PKK, a murderous Kurdish nationalist-Stalinist organisation, which has been at war with the Turkish state since 1984, has been used by the Syrian government against Turkey. This has alarmed the Turkish government. The area is now effectively autonomous.

The PKK is coming into armed conflict with both the mainstream armed opposition of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and with independent Islamist militias.

The FSA are opposed to the idea that this area is neutral in the fight against Assad. And there is a general, chauvinist, opposition to Kurdish freedom amongst the Sunni Arab dominated anti-Assad opposition.

Under US pressure a new opposition coalition, the National Coalition of the Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, was

formed in Qatar's capital, Doha, on 11 November.

It was immediately recognised by six key Gulf states plus Turkey and France.

The Syrian National Council – previously promoted as the main opposition grouping, and increasingly a front for the Muslim Brothers – has folded into the new formation, accepting 22 of 63 seats on the Coalition's governing body.

More recently Foreign Secretary William Hague told MPs that the UK has also decided on recognition.

The US has been more circumspect. France is pushing for arming the opposition, while Obama remains sceptical, worried that Islamist groups increasingly active in the opposition might later use sophisticated weapons against the US and its allies.

States such as Saudi Arabia are also arming and funding particular elements of the opposition – sufficiently to keep the conflict going, without leading to the complete collapse and break-up of the Syrian state. They would like Assad to go, but the entity to remain intact, rather than see a descent into chaos and warlordism, probably spreading disastrously to neighbouring countries.

Assad's tactic seems to be to encourage ethnic strife and fragmentation – for example by arming Druze, Shia and Christian militias in Damascus, in opposition to the Sunni majority.

In this way Assad hopes to maintain some hold on power.

oil.

The government is being kept afloat by financial aid from Iran, and possibly Russia. They may start printing money to cover their costs, something that may drive up inflation.

Rebels have overrun the 46th Division's base at Atarib, west of Aleppo. The base, spread over 12 sq km and the largest in northern Syria, had played a key role in the Assad regime's defence of Aleppo. Large quantities of weapons were seized.

ALEPPO

The regime still holds one big base near Aleppo, but most of the countryside and border crossings to Turkey are under opposition control.

The regime has to supply its outposts by air, and its military response to rebel activity is often inaccurate aerial bombardment.

Much of its 300,000-strong army is Sunni and considered unreliable, and so has been kept isolated and unused on army bases.

It is likely that soon the opposition militias will hold

Support Cameroon's trade unions against state repression!

By Jonny Keyworth

On 8 November musicians from the Musicians' Union of Cameroon protested in the capital Yaoundé against the Port of Douala's refusal to pay copyright royalties to artists.

More than 500 artists are reported to have been beaten with police batons and fists. 63 ended up in jail. Roméo Dika (Vice-President of the International Federation of Musicians) has now been accused of masterminding an insurrection in the country, a crime

that could mean life imprisonment and even the death penalty.

This sort of political psychosis is unfortunately common place in President Paul Biya's Cameroon.

Having enjoyed the fruits of power since 1982, President Biya was re-elected for his sixth term in October 2011 with 78% of the vote. Such a figure might suggest a widely popular President, but Biya has been clever in his manipulation of ethnic identity in the country. The country's 131st place in the United Nations Human Development Index is testament to his nepotism and

Cameroon's president Paul Biya has repressed unions

mismanagement of the economy.

Biya has created a hostile environment for opposition forces and trade unionism. The legal-bureaucratic framework which has kept Biya in power for six terms, means that a union cannot

include workers from both the private and public sector.

The tortuous legal process of attaining a certificate to perform legal trade union activities puts many workers off becoming trade union organisers. Any union seen to be too independent will not be able to attain the required certificates.

The right to strike is also heavily restricted, as arbitration is obligatory for all industrial disputes and workers who ignore this can be easily dismissed.

The arrest of five members of a teachers' union in

2010 demonstrates the legal straitjacket — they were charged with taking part in an illegal demonstration, and other members were harassed for their involvement.

The accused and their lawyers are often not told when the hearings are taking place; this tactic as well as adjournments of court disorganises and eats into the budgets of the already over-stretched unions.

Whilst Biya has managed to manipulate various groups within Cameroon and opposition remains fragmented, Cameroon's economy continues to de-

cline and unemployment is growing.

The time is ripe for Cameroon's opposition groups to unite to struggle for Biya's overthrow and the seizing of workers' rights in Cameroon.

Musicians across Africa, particularly hip-hop collectives such as Y'en A Marre in Senegal, are becoming consistent elements of political revolution on the continent.

Cameroonian musicians must take their place in this tradition.

● Support Cameroon's musicians: bit.ly/XpuzAK

Many Bradford Wests?

Dave Osler



Lee Jasper is running as the Respect candidate in Croydon North. Meanwhile, the redoubtable Yvonne Ridley is running on the same ticket in Rotherham, and from what I am hearing, it is squeaky bum time in two places that should be donkey with a red rosette territory.

Only the voters, and not the bookmakers, will decide the outcomes of these contests, of course. But the shortening odds on the two Respect parliamentary hopefuls indicates that George Galloway's party may do better than many commentators, myself included, had been expecting.

Last time I checked, William Hill was giving 8-1 on Ridley, while Jasper was in from 25-1 to 10-1 with Ladbrokes. Their Labour rivals — Steve Reed in the London suburb and Sarah Champion in South Yorkshire — remain very much the odds-on favourites, of course.

Normal caveats apply. Political betting markets can be manipulated by savvy campaigners willing to make a relatively small investment in losing stakes, in exchange for the bragging rights that ensue.

Moreover, our turf accountant friends will be mindful of the caning they took in Bradford West earlier this year, when the early punters could have lumped on Galloway at 33-1. The prices on Ridley and Jasper will have been adjusted accordingly.

But for the sake of argument, what are the implications for the left of Respect saving its deposit — or getting a double figures percentage, or just, just maybe even winning — in two of the three seats up for grabs this Thursday?

For Labour, the complacency implicit in the decision taken at the start of the Blair era to ignore a core vote that supposedly had "nowhere else to go" will stand exposed.

While immediate alarmist response would be overdoing things somewhat, the dangers of not repairing the first crack in the dam should be apparent even to the Labour leader-

ship.

If Respect confirms an ability to transcend a predominantly Muslim base and bolt on disgruntled Old Labour diehards and the bien pensant middle class, it becomes a potential threat to Labour in several dozen constituencies nationwide.

Not that it would take victory to instantiate that threat, you understand; the split vote alone would benefit parties from the Lib Dems rightwards.

In particular, Labour will need to rethink its methods of choosing candidates in high-profile by-elections, as underlined by the shortlisting fiasco in Rotherham in particular.

Parachuting in Progress supporters and imposing two-person shortlists of white women chief executives and RAF officers on activists in a former steel town seem to have bitten Labour on the bum this time round. Come back locally-grounded rightwing trade union apparatchiks, all is forgiven.

FAR LEFT

Meanwhile, the far left will desperately attempt to present any Respect success as their success too, as an illustration of widespread desire for an alternative to One Nation Labourism.

What the central committees won't mention is that a strong showing by Respect will be in stark contrast to the poor performance of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. The failure to create an audience for socialism has left the field open to Respect's brand of amorphous religiously-centred populism.

Finally, what of Respect itself? Well, Galloway, Jasper and Ridley are all colourful individuals and would make a most entertaining trio of MPs.

Jasper would have to be on his best behaviour if he is to avoid alienating the socially-conservative elements in the Muslim community. I put it no more strongly than that.

Ridley's sometimes loose-cannon pronouncements on many topics would also inevitably attract both scrutiny and ridicule. The risks of further incidents akin to Galloway's "bad sexual etiquette" outburst would be very real.

But whether they win or lose, a strong showing by Respect in four days' time will necessitate tactical re-assessment all round.

rael, and demand not to be part of a big Arab state ruled from Cairo or Baghdad, but to have their own state).

SW sees its desired future also as "secular". But how does that square with their support for Hamas, who are vehemently anti-secular?

SW's line amounts to abandoning all pressure on Israel to negotiate and counselling the Palestinians to wait for a promised future pan-Arab effort, called "democratic" for no clear reason, which will revenge them by imposing on the Israeli Jews the conquest and suppression which the Palestinians themselves have suffered at the hands of Israel. It is both unrealistic in any foreseeable future and reactionary.

Eric Lee's polemic (*Solidarity* 265) is right in condemning the slogan "From The River To The Sea", used by some demonstrators against the Israeli assault on Gaza. The slogan implies the conquest and driving-out of the Israeli-Jewish people.

CEASEFIRE

Eric's polemic, however, begs another question. He suggests calling for a ceasefire.

At the time of the previous, bigger, Israeli attack on Gaza, in early 2009, Eric endorsed slogans like "Yes to peace, no to Hamas terror", which, if they were a call for ceasefire at all, put the onus entirely on Hamas.

We disagreed then and we disagree now. We oppose Hamas's stated aim of establishing Islamist rule over the whole of Palestine.

But there is a huge disproportion of casualties — 160 Palestinians, six Israelis. There is a huge disproportion of forces: Israel could negotiate a two-states deal if it wanted to; Hamas can do little.

Those facts made the chief demand "stop the Israeli assault on Gaza". There's the additional fact that the conflict seems probably to have been unleashed deliberately by Israeli prime minister Netanyahu for electoral and geo-tactical rea-

UKIP foster scandal: children should come first

By Rosalind Robson

The exact facts surrounding the political row about the UKIP-member foster carers from Rotherham are unclear.

No child, whatever their background, should be fostered by racists. It is the thankless job of social workers to ensure that doesn't happen; mistakes are bound to be made. In Rotherham, where this week a by-election to replace expenses-fiddling Labour MP Denis MacShane takes place, every politician has declared that a mistake has indeed been made. But how do they know that? Are they childcare professionals with access to the confidential information?

Representatives of the Labour-controlled council aren't saying much (rightly so if they want to protect the identities of the children).

There is no need to accept the Tory and tabloid demands to scrap guidelines that ensure children should be fostered or adopted where their "cultural and ethnic needs can be met". There is a debate to be had here, but surely such considerations are valid ones, and made with the long-term welfare of vulnerable children in mind.

No need either to give any credit to UKIP for being, as it proudly claims at the top of its website, non-racist. Their drive to stop immigration and to leave the EU speaks for itself.

However, membership of UKIP is not in itself evidence of an individual's racism.

There can be no doubt that the media storm accompanying the controversy has been cynically whipped up by the right. In the first place the *Telegraph's* original report of the case was provided by UKIP in order to dramatise "political correctness gone mad", and highlight the fact that the couple concerned are ex-Labour supporters and so on.

The prize for the most ridiculous rant goes to right-wing blog-hack Graeme Archer, who writing on the *Daily Telegraph* website, advocated Social Service bosses be elected in order that they are "accountable".

Accountable to who? To children in care? No. To illiterate, bigoted anti-multiculturalists like himself, of course!

sons.

Most of the Gaza protests, even those where "From the river..." was heard, mobilised mainly people driven by proper anger against the use of overwhelming Israeli military might.

AWL members were there, sharing the anger, arguing for our "two-states" view against all "conquer-Israel" slogans, and getting a hearing.

Martin Thomas, Islington

• www.workersliberty.org/gaza-debate

Wrong on free speech

Workers' Liberty ("Leeds Student and Nick Griffin", workersliberty.org/leedsstudent, 9 November) justifies censorship of Nick Griffin and fascists thus:

"It is because of the threat their physical presence and organising poses to oppressed groups, to democratic rights and to the very existence of the student and labour movements."

It is even argued that "the reality of his politics ... remain[s] largely hidden" then shortly after asks "the question of why the interview was taking place at all."

Five days later, *Solidarity* 264 ("Right-wing threat to anti-war meeting", 14 November) reports: "Young Tory louts have put out a call online to disrupt a Workers' Liberty student forum on Thursday 15 November about the meaning of the First World War [... and published] articles arguing that even to suggest a debate on the politics of remembrance is beyond the pale."

Censoring one particular expression of an idea may be a zero-sum game but unfortunately oppressive ideas (right-wing and left) are qualitatively not.

Leave the slippery slope of censorship to right-wingers and stick up for free speech as socialists.

Jon D. White, Socialist Party of Great Britain

Letters



Slogans on Gaza

Socialist Worker (24 November), reporting on Gaza, explicitly opposes "calls for Israel and Palestine to negotiate a settlement". "The only solution", it says, "is to create a single state that allows Jews and Arabs to live alongside each other".

The voluntary merger of neighbouring nations into larger units is desirable all across the world. But merger without negotiation? Involuntary merger? That is only another way of saying "conquest".

If in areas where decades of cooperation have eroded old conflicts — say, between Britain and France — social progress had made national differences fade so much that the neighbouring nations were merging into a common political unit, then we might hope that after some decades or generations the Israeli Jews and the Palestinian Arabs would follow.

But that is not happening. SW's talk of "living alongside each other" suggests a voluntary merger, with nations so harmonised that they meld into a common unit; but their opposition to negotiation makes it clear that they advocate merger by force, in other words conquest.

Conquest by whom? By "a democratic uprising across the region".

But how can the uprising be "democratic" if it involves — if, in fact, the chief purpose of it is — the forcible suppression of the Israeli Jews? (And of other nations too? The Palestinians have been badly treated by Arab states as well as by Is-

Occupy to stop closures!

occupations. We urge those who don't to read on and find out more. And soon. The public "consultation" by the Special Administrator appointed to oversee these cuts ends in February.

Occupations put continuous and forceful pressure on managers to keep providing services they want to take away.

Occupations put control of the service into the hands of the workers — for example they can organise to run a full service instead of one that is being run down in preparation for closure.

All workers in the hospital can get involved in an occupation, whatever their union or position in the hospital "hierarchy". Unorganised workers can get involved. Staff not directly employed by the Trust can join in.

An occupation will be the organising hub for the broader campaign, helping to build support for other actions, demonstrations, press conferences...

An occupation is better able to tackle the obstacles put up by managers. It can be a means to create a coherent and democratically-organised campaign. With inclusive organisation and clear lines of communication, an occupation can give the workers in the hospital and their supporters in the community a real say over the direction of the campaign.

An occupation can become an alternative driving force and counterweight to the local politicians who want to take over and stop any form of militant action. In Lewisham we can challenge the Labour councillors who are making £30 million of cuts — much of which will impact badly on people's health!

DRAMA

The physical, financial and moral support of people in the local community is essential to keep the occupation going. But an occupation also adds sharpness, drama and purpose to the broader campaign of demonstrations and protests.

People who depend on threatened services will feel strengthened in their resolve to be part of the campaign.

Some on the left are advocating workers' strike action. Strike action, if it can be achieved, could put pressure on hospital management and be a powerful demonstration of opposition. But it does not make sense as a be-all-and-end-all strategy.

The impact of a 24-hour strike with emergency cover would be limited. Once the strike is over, what happens next? It will not have the dynamic campaign-building potential of an occupation.

All-out strike is very difficult, and probably impossible to organise in a hospital where essential life-saving and sustaining services are provided. Providing emergency cover (i.e. minimum staffing) is not an answer in departments like the A&E, because they are by definition emergency cover departments!

Strikes, whether token or indefinite, are not the only form of struggle in working-class history. Work-ins and occupations also have a central place. The centre pages of this paper explain more.

Much more is at stake in Lewisham than the closure of one A&E and a maternity service. If Lewisham wins, we can go on to stop other A&E closures, other "rationalisations" of maternity services. We can hold back the privatisations that are now coming thick and fast in the wake of Tory reforms of the health service.

We can demand and win the cancellation of the PFI debts. We can win back the health service the vast majority want.

That is a publicly owned, funded and accountable service, which meets all our health care needs, and which is free at the point of delivery.

The 24 November march to save the A&E and maternity services at Lewisham Hospital in London was a tremendous demonstration of anger and opens up an opportunity to build a serious fight against NHS cuts.

If this cut goes ahead — triggered by a debt run up under a PFI scheme in a neighbouring NHS Trust — three quarters of a million people in this part of south London will depend on just one A&E department. Working-class people on the demonstration knew from their own experience and that of their relatives, neighbours and friends what this cut means. People will die.

The Lewisham demonstration will encourage other emerging and existing campaigns, especially where A&E departments are under threat, at Trafford General in Manchester and north-west London for instance. That is just another reason why the Lewisham campaign must win.

To win the campaign needs the best strategy. The history of struggles against hospital closures shows the most effective way to fight is to organise occupations.

Such action goes beyond the essential petitioning, demonstrating and other forms of public protest or even strike action by hospital workers.

In an occupation workers take over a threatened building or service and keep it running normally 24/7. Backed up by support in a local community, an occupation can stop management from closing down the threatened service.

An occupation also draws attention to the politics of our campaign. Tory and Labour governments pushed through PFI in order to provide risk free profits to the super rich. For every hospital built under PFI we end up paying for two. We are now losing our hospitals because another bosses' government wants to honour those financial bits of paper.

Did we agree to that? No! While the bricks and mortar exist, and the skills and expertise exist, we have the political right to do everything we can to preserve those things.

Some activists, trade unionists and socialists involved in the campaign will already know the rich history of hospital

NHS Unity Network

The NHS Unity Network aims to unite local campaigns and individual activists to take direct action to rescue the health service. It is producing a new bulletin with a step-by-step guide to building hospital occupations, which will be downloadable from its website — nhsunity.com

Help us raise £15,000

Workers' Liberty brought together spoken-word artists, performance poets, rappers, and other musicians on Saturday 24 November in Kings Cross for the fourth editions of "Beats, Rhymes, & Picket Lines", an occasional night of music and poetry to raise money for ongoing working-class struggles, as well as AWL itself.

Roundhouse poetry slam 2012 champion Hibaq Osman, BlueDragonfly Collective co-founder and AWL member Sarah Weston, and West Yorkshire punk/trip-hop band AltTrack all featured. The event was hosted by spoken-word poet/rapper The Ruby Kid (also an AWL member), who also performed alongside Dan Angell and Sensei C from Birmingham hip-hop duo HLI.

Hibaq Osman performs at "Beats, Rhymes, & Picket Lines"

The event raised £100 for Workers' Liberty, money which will be spent on software for the new (or at least less old) computer we were able to buy after the collection at the October AWL conference. Could you help organise similar benefit gig? If not, there are lots of other ways to help our fund appeal.

We want to raise £15,000 by May Day 2013. You can contribute in the following ways:

- Taking out a monthly standing order
- Making a donation by cheque, payable to "AWL", or donating online at www.workersliberty.org/donate.
- Taking copies of *Solidarity* to sell.
- Get in touch to discuss joining the AWL. More information: 07796 690874 / awl@workersliberty.org / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Road, London SE1 3DG.

Total raised so far: £5,851

We raised £320 this week from an increased standing orders, a donation, and the proceeds from a benefit gig. Thanks to Bruce and Pat.



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Please make payments to the debit of my account: Payee: Alliance for Workers' Liberty, account no. 20047674 at the Unity Trust Bank, 9 Brindley Place, Birmingham B1 2HB (08-60-01)

Amount: £ to be paid on the day of (month) 20

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By Jill Mountford

Occupations, or work-ins, are a sharp tool to be used by workers who want to continue to deliver their service in workplaces threatened with closure.

They assert control of the workplace and stop, or hinder, the bosses running it down bit by bit. They act as a centre for community mobilisation in a way that strike picket lines almost never can.

Work-ins where workers continue to be paid can be kept going for longer than strikes in which workers lose the wages they live on. In sectors like the health service, where strikes are never long or complete, and do not hurt bosses' profits, work-ins are often better for building wide support.

Although occupations are in fundamental ways more radical than strikes — asserting workers' control of the workplace, rather than just a suspension of the economic exchange between worker and boss — they are also, paradoxically, sometimes easier to get going where union organisation is weak.

A determined minority can declare a work-in, and then have the force of inertia helping it rally wavering workers to work along with it, in circumstances where that same minority would only isolate itself by striking and leaving the waverers still at work.

Last week's *Solidarity* looked at the occupation of the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Women's Hospital (EGA), which ran for almost two years in 1976-8 and successfully reprieved the hospital.

EGA had a national reputation, and the occupation had the support both of the women's movement and of senior staff within EGA. Management made no attempt to break the work-in beyond piecemeal efforts to demoralise the occupiers and their supporters and further run down the facilities.

HOUNSLOW

Not all hospital work-ins are like that. Hounslow Hospital, for example, was different.

In January 1977 it was finally announced that Hounslow

Occupations: the lessons we can learn

would close in August. Committees had already been campaigning against the closure plan for some time.

By March a work-in was under way. Management tried to transfer staff to other workplaces, threatening those who refused with sacking. They urged GPs not to transfer patients to Hounslow.

Workers continued to get paid from March up to the August closure date. In August, they organised a demonstration and a party for the patients. The closure date passed and the work-in continued.

The law said that as long as there were patients there, being cared for by staff, the Area Health Authority had a responsibility to pay the staff and maintain the hospital. The AHA

tried to get round the law but couldn't.

At EGA, consultants taking part in the work-in could admit patients. Hounslow was dependent on GPs referring patients. The AHA was turning patients away and had cut off phones. There were very few consultants in the occupation, and the traditional hierarchy of authority in the hospital had been broken down much more.

In October 1977 a team of district officers took forcible action by removing patients themselves, with police help and using private ambulance staff rather than NHS ambulance workers. The only phone line in the hospital was cut. (These days, occupiers would have mobile phones).

21 patients were dragged from their beds and put into pri-

Lewisham: how we mobilised

By a Lewisham healthworker

The demo on Saturday 24 November in defence of Lewisham Hospital had a great turnout. It took us a while to realise that.

Even though the campaign had distributed over 65,000 leaflets advertising the demo, Saturday dawned cold and rainy. Stewards starting gathering from 11.30am. By 1pm, we were beginning to feel disappointed at a small turnout.

But the advertised start wasn't until 2pm. By 1.45pm the staff contingent which I was part of had been ushered to the front of the march. My colleagues didn't get there until 2pm. By then the crowd was so thick that I had to scramble back over fences to find them.

As we headed off, it was hard to tell how big the march was. But when we got to a straight stretch of road, the line of people stretched back further than we could see.

The traffic in Lewisham came to a standstill. Bus after bus was stranded. Without exception drivers honked and waved in support despite the disruption.

The mood of the march was upbeat, but serious. Many people had their children with them, straining their voices to shout the loudest in defence of the hospital.

As we got to Ladywell Fields, our contingent had drifted back into the march, and we weren't sure how much of the march was still behind us. There were plenty of people already in the park, and a crowd gathered expectantly around the stage. As we approached the stage, an announcement was made that the speeches would not start yet — because

the end of the march was only just arriving back in the town centre, near the start of the route!

The placards were soggy and threatening to fall away from their wooden poles by this stage, and the grass in the park was churning into mud.

The delay was too much for one of my children. He fell over in the mud, I knew his friend would encourage them both to roll around in it, so we had to miss the speeches and head for the staff club.

By the time we got there all the seats downstairs were gone, and people were tucking into the buffet. The children ran around upstairs, but the place was soon full to the brim.

An impromptu meeting was held. Everyone took heart from the show of support. The idea of strikes and occupations was discussed, and we agreed that to hold a rally outside the hospital at lunchtime on Wednesday 28th and every week. The staff campaign group also set a time to meet.

Overall it was an incredibly successful event. Traffic control said there were 15,000, which is huge for a local demonstration.

Many of the people attending had not been on demonstrations before. I had to explain the chants to some of my colleagues. The revolution in Egypt had passed them by, but they got to this demo.

The placards made the point that PFIs put profit before people. One colleague said to me she was glad she hadn't got a placard that advocated strikes.

She had tried to support the BMA pensions dispute, but found striking to be a useless tactic. I explained that I had been all in favour of the 30 November strike and of making it more meaningful, but the unions had seemed happy to use the excuse of emergency cover to keep most of their members at work. Here and now, I said, an occupation seems far more likely to succeed.

There's a difficulty in striking when a service is planned to be shut anyway, and the strike may really only give management practice in how to manage without the service. There is also a genuine difficulty in health workers walking away from their patients. We don't want our class to suffer because of strike action, and there is a risk of this in the health service. That doesn't mean that we don't strike, but it's a hard decision to make, and the strikes are likely to be short and partial.

Management want to do away with most of Lewisham Hospital, and the best thing to do is to try to force it to stay open. The idea is to have a 'work-in' occupation, where the staff refuse to walk away, and make sure that the service keeps going, even when management want it to shut.

vate ambulances. Wards were trashed, and elderly patients were treated in a demeaning and degrading way.

A week later 2000 hospital workers struck and picketed the Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow Area Health Authority, protesting against the raid and demanding the hospital be reopened.

The AHA was forced to censure its own officials who had sanctioned and carried out the raid and to call for a public enquiry. David Ennals, then Labour Health Minister, refused the call.

The occupation of Hounslow Hospital continued for a further year to November 1977. The buildings were used for community campaigning and as a base for a national campaign to defend the NHS.

SOUTH LONDON

The occupation of South London Women's Hospital for a couple of months in 1984 was different again.

South London Women's Hospital was much smaller than EGA. The work-in began in spring 1984, when the threat of closure was announced by Wandsworth Health Authority. By July consultants were admitting fewer and fewer patients. Then they were offered transfer and the work-in ended.

Nurses and other staff wanted to fight on and with the support of local activists they called for a sleep-in as the last patient was moved from the hospital. Their aim was to keep the buildings in good repair and equipment on-site in the hope the hospital would be reopened.

For nine months hundreds of women from all over London and beyond, women from Greenham Common and Women Against Pit Closures joined the sleep-in. It lasted until March 1985, when police raided the building and physically removed the occupiers.

UCH

The occupation at University College Hospital, London, in 1993 was different again.

On 15 September 1993, in the middle of a strike over cuts and closures at the hospital, ward 2/3 in the Cruciform Building was occupied after management had emptied it of patients ready for closure.

The occupation was started by some local people and three striking nurses who, the day before, had been on a picket line where the idea to occupy was suggested by an SWP full-timer as a one-day stunt to get publicity. The occupiers decided to continue the occupation indefinitely after Eddie Coulson, a full-time Unison official, turned up to the occupation at 1am, flanked by hospital managers, with the clear intention of getting everyone to leave.

Coulson declared that Unison members would be disci-

plined for taking part. He offered to call off the strike and promise everyone would be back at work within 36 hours if the hospital CEO would promise to drop disciplinary threats.

On the morning of 16 September, the strike committee remained divided about the occupation. During a strike rally that day, all the strikers went up to the ward in an act of solidarity with the three nurses already in there. The idea was for them all to walk out together, united with the three nurses.

The three nurses refused to leave and started an emergency meeting to discuss the urgency of the situation and a proposal to take over another ward. Around 1000 people were outside at a rally, but marched off to Whitehall joined by most of the strikers and leaving no-one on the picket line. The hospital managers went in to close another ward.

Eventually the news got to the marchers, and they made their way back to the hospital.

On their return, some of the strikers took over the CEO's office, occupying it for a while, and others joined the ward occupation. Many of the strikers held a meeting. After hours of discussion they decided to back the occupation.

IDEA

From 1976 through to 1984 there were around 32 occupations or work-ins in hospitals and wards around the country.

It was a time when, starting with the Labour government after the economic crisis of 1974-5 and continuing with Thatcher's Tory administration, the National Health Service was being cut back on a large scale for the first time since its foundation in 1948.

It was also a time when the idea of occupations and work-ins was current in the labour movement. Such things were unknown in Britain between the 1930s and 1971; but then, between July 1971, when a work-in started at the UCS shipyard in Glasgow, and December 1975, nearly 150,000 workers took part in over 200 occupations.

The Labour government's turn to harsh cuts in 1976, under the terms of a crisis deal with the IMF, and then the Tory election victory in May 1979, dammed the flow of factory occupations. But the idea won new strength in the health service, where workers and communities felt more confidence about saying that closures could be stopped.

In 2013 we face bigger cuts to the National Health Service than in the 1970s and 80s. The Tory/Lib-Dem government plans £20 billion of NHS cuts, and their effects will be wors-

ened by the Health and Social Care Act passed in March 2012.

In the past, usually hospitals threatened with closure were run down for a period before the axe actually fell, often before any consultation had even taken place. In 2013 we see Lewisham Hospital's A&E slated for closure just months after being refurbished, on the sole grounds that PFI payments to private contractors have driven the South London Healthcare Trust into bankruptcy, something that was not possible in the NHS of the 1970s and 80s.

We see services being cut while at the same time billions are being handed out to private profiteers leeching off the Health Service.

Potentially this time too we could see the idea of occupations spread from the factory sector — Vestas, Visteon, and Prisme Packaging in 2009 — to the Health Service.

Occupations are not a one-size-fits-all magic solution. Demonstrations, protests, pickets, petitioning, and many other tactics will be required as well as occupations to stop closures of hospitals and wards.

RIGHT TOOL

In every dispute and campaign, workers have to consider which is the right tool for the job.

For workers in the emergency services such as hospitals, especially Accident and Emergency units, strikes are not usually not the right tool, or they are at best only a secondary tool, used from time as a form of demonstration and protest rather than economic pressure like a strike in a factory.

In 1982 nurses called on the support of thousands of miners and industrial workers, directly appealing to them to for solidarity strike action. Miners, printworkers on national newspapers, and others came to their aid.

That sort of solidarity strike could help now, but requires a high level of confidence and organisation in the trade union movement, especially as solidarity strikes now face legal barriers which they did not then.

It is not likely to happen without the campaign previously being developed to a high level through other tactics, which should include occupations.

Creditors' snapback raises risk of new crashes

By Martin Thomas

Behind the current global capitalist crisis is a snapback in the shifting balance between creditors and debtors. A recent US court ruling about Argentina's payments on its bonds (IOUs) marks a sharper snap, with large potential ricochet effects.

After defaulting (ceasing to make payments due) on its bonds in 2001, Argentina worked out a deal with most of the bondholders to cancel the old bonds and replace them by new ones with a smaller payback.

Argentina liked the deal because it opened a way back to borrowing on global financial markets. The bondholders liked it because it replaced old bonds which had become pretty much worthless with new ones worth something.

ROUTINE

That sort of operation has become more routine as modern capitalism has developed. In earlier times, for example, Greece's default in 1826 shut it out of international capital markets for 53 consecutive years.

Now, when radical economists advocate Greece stop payment on its debt, they can assume, more or less, that after the stop Greece will be able to negotiate some deal to restore access to international credit.

It has also become easier for individuals and companies to go bust. Until 1869, in England, you were likely to be jailed if you missed payment on your debts, and kept there until you did pay. Now over 100,000 individuals and 16,000 companies go bust each year, and often emerge hurt but thriving. In the USA, many big corporations have been through "Chapter 11 bankruptcy", and relish it as a chance to shed their obligations to workers.

Easier credit, on the basis of non-payment by a percentage of borrowers being an understood and routinely-managed

problem, has become a standard underpinning of capitalist expansion.

The court ruling is a sharp turn backwards. It says that Argentina cannot continue with its reduced-payments bonds deal unless it also makes full payments to the minority bondholders who refused the deal.

The Argentine government is naturally angry. The minority bondholders are "vulture funds" who picked up the bonds at fire-sale prices after Argentina's default, and stand to make huge profits from the ruling. Part of the deal was to issue the replacement bonds under New York law (to give the bondholders more confidence than if they were issued under Argentine law; in the same way, Greece's recent replacement

bonds have been issued under English law); so the judgement on Argentina's finances came from an 82-year old judge in a US District Court.

According to financial expert Felix Salmon, "Argentina's best hope is that the Second Circuit [court] will be swayed [on appeal] by the arguments from the Bank of New York, the New York Fed, the Depository Trust Company, the Clearing House Association, and just about everybody else with a stake in the smooth functioning of New York markets" [who don't want the deal disrupted].

FOREIGN OBLIGATIONS

If not, "the obvious thing for Argentina to do is to simply default on all its foreign obligations.

"It could then launch another exchange offer, saying that anybody holding the exchange bonds could swap them into domestic Argentine bonds with exactly the same terms" [but outside the scope of New York law].

The scope of the court ruling is limited by what law bonds are issued under, and the exact legal clauses for each bond issue. Experts, however, reckon that if upheld it will seriously hurt the prospects for future post-default deals, and make the whole system more brittle.

By 2008 the spiral of debt in the capitalist world economy had risen so high that some collapse was inevitable. The working assumption of all capitalist plans to mend the crisis is that deals can be done to wind the spiral back in a fairly orderly way, and then start it going again.

Whether that was ever going to be possible without further cataclysmic implosions like the US mortgage crash of 2006-7, and the Lehman Brothers collapse and bank-to-bank lending crash of 2008, was always doubtful. The ruling makes it still more doubtful.

Under capitalism, working-class people generally lose out both when rich debtors escape easily (Chapter 11) and when rich creditors bite back.

Terry Liddle, 1948-2012: a fighter for freedom



By Bruce Robinson

Terry Liddle, who died of a stroke on 18 November aged 64, will be best known to readers of *Solidarity* for his activity in the Socialist Alliance and its successor groups in the early 2000s.

This was however only part of a rich life in revolutionary politics stretching back over 50 years in South East London. He joined the Young Communist League in the early 60s, was briefly in Healy's Socialist Labour League, and then became a libertarian Marxist, open to and with links to anarchism, remaining active on the left until his death despite a long period of poor health.

From the mid 60s onwards, I don't think there were any major shifts in Terry's basic political standpoint, though he certainly was influenced by the rise of green politics and radical environmentalism. His politics found a home in a wide array of political organisations.

When I first met him in 1968, he had been in various anarchist groups and was involved in one of several attempts to take over the rump of the Independent Labour Party, which was rich in assets and short of members — I remember being enlisted to attend an ILP meeting at the Keir Hardie Hall in Plaistow. That fizzled out, and in the 70s Terry was involved in a number of small libertarian and Council Communist groups. He eventually had phases in the Labour Party — writing in 1991, "After a decade as an intransigent ultra-left sectarian, joining the Labour Party wasn't easy. Staying in it is harder still" — then the Greens, the Socialist Alliance and the small groupings that tried to keep it alive after the SWP and SP had walked out in order to wreck it.

In recent years, he was mainly involved in secularist activ-

ities with the South East London Humanists and in founding the Freethought History Research Group (FHRG), for whom he wrote a number of pamphlets.

Despite his self-description, Terry was decidedly non-sectarian, always willing to discuss with those on the left even if he disagreed with them and seeking out opportunities to participate in what he saw as promising realignments. (His judgement in this was not always good, and he once ended up being drawn into an ostensibly anarchist group that was a front for fascists.) He attended a number of AWL summer schools, arguing the libertarian line on Kronstadt at one debate about the Bolsheviks and the early years of the Russian Revolution.

PROJECTS

Particularly in the 1968 period when I met him, Terry also launched projects that had better intentions than organisation.

One that particularly sticks in the memory was a demo in Croydon against the National Front where about 30 of us marched outnumbered by the NF in cars. Terry had to be restrained from laying into them with a banner pole, which would have been suicidal in the circumstances. The poor turnout was probably due to the demo coinciding with the famous Rolling Stones concert in Hyde Park, an event that must have passed Terry by! I also recall a small demo to the French Embassy in pouring rain in solidarity with the "events" of May-June '68.

Other obituarists have noted that Terry, with his advocacy of republicanism and secularism (and a liking for beer), would not have been out of place in one of the pre-1914 socialist organisations, most fittingly Morris' Socialist League with its links to both Marxism and anarchism. Indeed one of his forefathers had been a member of the SDF.

The last time I remember discussing with Terry was at an AWL school where I had given a talk on the pioneer Marxist "proletarian philosopher" Joseph Dietzgen. Terry was keen

to talk about Fred Casey, the little known British "Dietzgenite" who had been active in the Labour Colleges movement. He was concerned to rescue the socialist and secularist fighters of the past from the "condescension of posterity" and also to write the history of radicalism and the left as well as poetry.

Terry was a person who was difficult to dislike. He had a great love of life, which was tested by poor health and increasing disability over recent years, and a keen sense of humour. While he never found an organisation for any time that suited his temperament and views, he remained committed to revolutionary socialist politics, making a distinct and individual contribution to the movement.

His view of life shines through in some verses from his own poem "Death Song" (available in a collection from the FHRG via deborahberns@yahoo.co.uk):

"Comrades when I'm dead and gone, no more than dust on the breeze

I beg you grant me one last wish, comrades do this for me please

Raise a glass of the blood red wine or a mug of the barley brew

Bid farewell to your comrade one of the foolish few

Who thought we could rearrange the world, dreamed we could make all things new

Kiss goodbye to my lovers, whose bodies I warmed with lust

My body once warm it is no more, naught but a whiff of dust

Remember how we fought the fight, lost and fought again

How we bound our bloody wounds, how we endured the pain

For we knew that like the phoenix our cause would rise again

The banners are tattered and faded, a paler shade of red

The devices writ upon them now can be hardly read

But we know every one of the words of hope, words of struggle and fight

A dream of a new and brighter dawn after the long dark night

A world reborn in liberty, a world we have put to right."

Cyprus bows to the Troika. What will the Greek left learn?

By Theodora Polenta

From Friday 23 November Cyprus is officially subject to a European Union/ European Central Bank/ IMF (Troika) Memorandum.

The decision did not take anybody by surprise. The question was about the timing. Cyprus's presidential elections are due in February. AKEL, the Cypriot Communist Party, which currently governs (Greek) Cyprus, is expected to lose and the right wing Democratic Rally is expected to win.

The question was whether president Dimitris Christofias would dare to go down in history as the leader of the first "communist" government to place its country under the boot of the Troika. In a fight against the time, Christofias was trying to borrow 5 billion euros from Vladimir Putin's supposedly "anti-imperialist" Russia. The answer from Russia this time was a big "Nyet".

The AKEL government spokesman said it was a very difficult negotiation but the government "has achieved a bearable Memorandum... under those financial circumstances we are satisfied with the end result".

According to Reuters, the "financial aid" provided by the memorandum will be around 17.5 billion euros. Up to 10 billion will be allocated for the recapitalisation of the banks, 6 billion for debt refinancing, and just 1.5 billion to cover Cypriot government spending.

The memorandum will be submitted to the Eurogroup around 12 December, and Cypriot finance minister Vassos Shiarly estimates that Cyprus will receive the first bail-out funds in late January. He assured bondholders that there is absolutely no chance of Cyprus defaulting.

A poll published on the website of the newspaper "Kathimerini" claims that 58% of Greek Cypriots approve the Memorandum. There is more support for it from the voters of the Democratic Rally (80%) than from those of AKEL, 61% of whom reject the memorandum.

AKEL has been implementing cuts since 2010. But the historic move to put Cyprus under long-term Troika supervision — placing in hock even the natural gas resources which represent hoped-for future wealth — has sent shock waves through the left in both Cyprus and Greece.

The symbolism of an allegedly communist president signing the Memorandum, when virtually all anti-Memorandum movements are connected with the resurgence of left wing politics, is potent.

The problem in Cyprus is not high deficit and public debt, like Greece. According to the official figures, Cypriot debt is 73% of GDP, much lower than the European average of 88%, and the deficit is 4.5%, lower than the UK or France.

Cyprus's case resembles that of Ireland. The state has been brought down by the collapse of a banking sector puffed up on speculation.

In 2010 AKEL handed over 3 billions euros to the banks of Cyprus. The banks bet the money on Greek bonds and other Greek loans, hoping to make easy and quick profits. The Greek debt "haircut" caused massive losses to the Cypriot banks.

The Troika estimates the amount required to recapitalise the banks at 10 billion euros, while the AKEL government says it is 7 billion. At 10 billion, the rescue package will sky rocket Cyprus's public debt from 72% of GDP to above 130%, by turning bank debt into public debt. Since the revenues from natural gas will not arrive for some years, this debt figure means Cyprus being trapped under long term international financial supervision, with repeated austerity packages.

The big dispute in the negotiations between AKEL and the Troika was not the amount of the cuts, but that the Troika demanded the majority of austerity measures be taken during 2012-3, whereas AKEL tried to shift them towards 2015-6. Actually for 2016 the austerity package proposed by AKEL is bigger than the one proposed by the Troika. The only battle from AKEL was to try to postpone the cuts until after the end

of Christofias's presidency!

The austerity measures follow the well-known Greek recipe, including dismantling of labour laws, union rights, and collective bargaining agreements.

The AKEL government wanted to limit the cutbacks in wages, to restructure and not to cancel inflation-protection for wages, and to increase taxation of higher incomes. However, all AKEL's "red lines" have already begun to fade.

The right-wing opposition parties have been criticising AKEL for tardiness; the main trade union bureaucrats, from SEK (linked to Democratic Rally), PEO (AKEL), and DEOK (EDEK), all agreed to the Memorandum provided that AKEL "did tough negotiations with the Troika".

In 2008 Cyprus had a budget surplus of 0.9% and an accumulated debt of 48.9% of GDP. Now it has a deficit of 4.5% and a debt of 72%. During these years the AKEL government of AKEL has handed over 9.8 billion to banks and businesses, but only 1.0 billion to the working class.

Unemployment is already officially at 11% and 25% for people under 25 years old, and 23.6% of the population is already threatened by poverty and social exclusion.

There was another way.

LEFT

A government of the left should have never signed the memorandum, because it leads Cypriot society into mass poverty, unemployment, and misery.

The left should have fought for the development and escalation of industrial and social struggles, reinvigoration of the rank and file trade union movement, rolling strikes, occupations, stoppages, demonstrations, in order to force AKEL to refuse the Memorandum.

To the dilemma about whether to pay wages or debt, the response from the side of the workers should be clear: to pay wages. The debt is not created by the workers and should not be paid by the workers.

The left should fight for a program of transitional demands, based upon workers' self management and control and the social planning of the economy to meet the needs of the people and not for the profits of a handful of capitalist parasites.

The forces to the left of AKEL are still relatively small. ERAS was established in 2011 with the aim of bringing together people of the radical Left for more systematic, extensive and effective political action.

When the Troika arrived in Cyprus on 8 November, ERAS organised the first anti-Memorandum protest outside the House of Representatives. About 50 people responded to the call, despite steady rain.

Members and friends of ERAS are also involved in the newly formed Syriza Cyprus, inspired by the upsurge in Greece.

Cyprus shows the consequences if a government of the left comes to power lacking a political plan of confrontation with the capitalist system and without being dialectically linked to massive working-class mobilisations from below.

Syriza must learn to avoid the road of AKEL. Syriza should remain focused on the aim of overthrowing the memoran-

dum and the Troika and the coalition government, via the mobilisation of the working class, as a first step to the overthrow of the capitalist system. There is no "realistic" governmental program of "resolving" the crisis that will reconcile working-class interests and social needs with the needs of the Greek ruling class and the national and international bondholders.

During the "14th international meeting of communist parties in Lebanon (22-25 November), KKE secretary Aleka Papariga described KKE as resilient against the "sirens of Syriza's plan of a government of the left". "We reject every political force that supports governing within the constraints of the capitalist system".

She defined the major task of KKE was defined as former a front against Syriza.

Yet the new presidential candidate of AKEL, Stavros Malas, met Papariga a couple of weeks ago, and KKE declared its support for him.

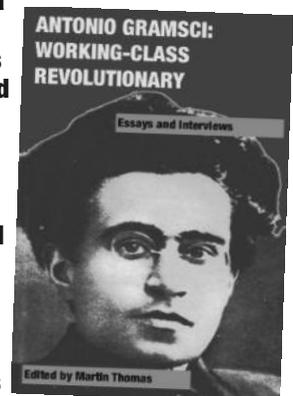
At the end of the meeting Papariga declared: "I do not know and I cannot predict what is going to happen in Cyprus. It is in fashion to form an anti-memorandum and anti-Merkel front. KKE says that this front falls far below the needs of an anti-monopoly front... Cyprus is close to a Memorandum. Hopefully this will not be enforced through measures as hard as the ones in Greece".

Stavros Malas took the hint immediately: "As has been said extensively, this crisis is a systemic crisis, and a short sighted anti memorandum approach is not the answer".

KKE's "all or nothing" sectarian approach, considering Syriza as its main enemy, has mutated to offering tacit support to the Memorandum government of AKEL: "The anti-memorandum front cannot respond to the needs of the working class movement and most importantly conceals the underlying cause of the crisis"...

ANTONIO GRAMSCI: WORKING-CLASS REVOLUTIONARY

Antonio Gramsci was a leader of the Italian Communist Party in its revolutionary days, and spent his last years in Mussolini's fascist jails. *The Prison Notebooks* he wrote in jail have been quarried to justify many varieties of reformist or liberal politics.



This booklet discusses a major recent study on the *Notebooks* — Peter Thomas's *The Gramscian Moment* — and argues that the *Notebooks* were in fact a powerful contribution to the working-out of revolutionary working-class strategy in developed capitalist societies.

£4 from AWL, 20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG. Order online at www.workersliberty.org/gramscibook

Southampton rebel councillors speak out: “Doing nothing was never an option”

Keith Morrell and Don Thomas are councillors on Southampton Council, representing the Coxford ward.

When they campaigned and voted against a budget proposal that would have seen a swimming pool in their ward close, they were disciplined by the Labour Party and eventually left the Labour group, forming an independent “Labour Councillors

Against the Cuts” group on the council. Keith and Don spoke to *Solidarity* about the fight against cuts locally, the potential for anti-cuts Labour councillors to coordinate nationally, and the wider politics the labour movement needs to articulate to mobilise a real fightback.

This text is abridged from a much longer interview, available at tinyurl.com/sotoncouncillors

How did your campaign begin?

Keith: Don and I campaigned against the closure of Oaklands swimming pool, which was presented to us unilaterally and without any debate or consultation within the Labour group. Keeping the pool open had been a Labour Party election pledge. We spoke against the closure at the full Council meeting and voted against the mini-budget in which the closure was proposed. We were told immediately that we would be subject to a disciplinary investigation. That dragged on for over two months.

There’s a case for saying that we should have stayed in the Labour group, and continued fighting our corner. We believed that everything was stacked against us, and we were surprised by the extent to which the Labour group as a whole closed ranks and appeared willing to rubber stamp the situation. We knew what was coming, so we just fast-forwarded the process.

How did the local government unions respond?

Keith: We approached the trade unions, Unison and Unite, and they were both supportive. They gave £1,000 to our campaign. We distributed 6,000 leaflets opposing the closure in our ward, twice, which the unions funded. They also supported the organisation of a public meeting in the ward, which was attended by over 200 people. We were overwhelmed with support from constituents.

When we made the decision to leave the Labour group, the Unison branch secretary and the Unite

convenor were the first people we went to speak to and tell. We were told, there and then, that the unions wouldn’t be opposing the setting of the budget.

Don: They were still supportive of us to an extent, and respected our stance. But the trade unions are in an unusual position in Southampton. They’ve just come out of a two-year conflict, and there is a level of exhaustion there. The local leaderships of the trade unions desperately want to work in harmony with the Labour group, and we were very integral to facilitating that happening previously. But with me and Keith out of the Labour group, I think that relationship might break down, and I can foresee a lot of conflict in the future.

What are the prospects for organising a fight in Southampton between now and the February meeting at which the budget is set?

Keith: We know that there are people who want to fight. On 15 November, there was a mass meeting for all union members, and on 22 November, there was a meeting of youth workers, who are in the firing line as all youth and play provision is being axed.

I think a mood for fightback will develop more widely, and not just amongst the people directly threatened by the new cuts. You don’t go through two years of combat and then just give up. People learned lessons during that period about their own strength, and you can’t just put that sort of thing back in the box.

Don: Our focus in the immediate period will be to

organise a series of public meetings, not just in our ward but in the whole city, where people can come and discuss the cuts we’re facing and how we can oppose them.

Creating those spaces where people can engage with politics around issues that directly affect them is vitally important. When people are given the opportunity to engage in that way, they can be mobilised. It’s the lack of those spaces and opportunities that’s behind a lot of what’s seen as apathy or disaffection — people voting in greater numbers for X Factor than in elections, for example. I find it obscene that politicians turn things back on the electorate and complain about apathy and disengagement when they’re responsible for denying people the opportunities to take direct control in their local community or workplace.

We also need national co-ordination. It’s time to say enough is enough, and start fighting back. We send fraternal greetings to Labour councillors in Hull, Broxtowe, and anywhere else who want to resist cuts. We’re still on a journey, and to an extent we’re

making things up as we go along, but doing nothing was not an option.

What wider positive politics are necessary, beyond basic opposition to cuts?

Keith: We’re socialists. I believe the only solution is a democratic, planned economy. We have to find a way of getting over the message that this isn’t just about cuts, or balancing local budgets, but about a social system. It’d be very easy to base ourselves on a

populist, anti-political platform, but that would be a terrible mistake. It’s easy to be negative and oppose, but we need to translate opposition into a positive political platform.

Don: That’s why we’re putting so much emphasis on organising public meetings. It’s a forum to discuss alternatives, and win people over to these ideas. People need to know they don’t have to swallow the line that councillors need to make “hard choices”, and that if Labour councils

don’t make cuts, the government will step in and make them anyway. That’s a defeatist attitude.

What should Labour be fighting for?

Keith: The Labour leaders, and to an extent the union leaders, are in a political straitjacket, trying to make this system work. It can’t work in favour of our class. Putting forward an alternative must start with basic working-class policies, like public ownership of utilities, transport, and other public services, as well as the banking system. If a coherent programme was built around these demands, working-class people would respond. These policies are working-class common-sense.

We feel we’re at the beginning of a long journey, and although it sometimes feels like we’re alone, we know we’re not.

It’s a big challenge, but we just have to have the courage of our convictions.

- The Labour Representation Committee has set up a network for anti-cuts Labour councillors. Contact via Pete Radcliff, pete.radcliff@ntlworld.com

Why Unison does not oppose cuts budget

Southampton District Unison Branch Secretary Mike Tucker spoke to *Solidarity* about the new cuts facing his members at Southampton Council. This is an extract from a longer interview, at bit.ly/RWhqcp

On 15 November, a mass meeting of union members agreed a motion, proposed by a joint stewards’ committee, for a campaign against new cuts at Southampton Council.

We’re calling a demonstration and lobby on 13 February, when the budget is due to be set. We’ve also decided to consult members on striking on that day.

As a consequence of what the previous Tory administration did, the council is facing a budget

crisis. The budget the new administration is proposing includes 325 job cuts. That’s 9% of the directly-employed workforce. There are a number of services threatened with complete closure — the four main ones are the youth and play service, the last remaining council-run children’s home, the council’s archaeological service, and the tourist information services.

Up to 25% of jobs in areas like libraries, street sweeping, and parks are also at risk. It’s the worst budget situation the council’s ever faced.

In meetings we’ve had with members, the anger is still directed largely towards the previous administration. Politically, most people accept that the Labour administration isn’t “to blame”, as such,

but they still want to fight against the cuts and to save their jobs.

The council is setting up a campaign called “Stand Up for Southampton”, which is about demanding an increase in central government funding. The formula the government uses to calculate local funding is making the situation in Southampton worse than the rest of Hampshire. The unions are supporting that. Where initiatives can be made to campaign to save particular services, involving both workers and service users, we’ll pursue that.

We’re opposed to all cuts, but the unions aren’t calling on councillors to refuse to implement them. We’re calling on the council to implement its own redeployment policy, which will ensure some

workers who might face redundancy are redeployed instead. We’re also trying to renegotiate the redundancy policy, which was imposed by the Tories and which discriminates against lower-paid workers facing compulsory redundancies.

Ultimately, however, we accept that the council has to set a lawful budget. If they don’t, commissioners will come in and run the council. They’ll make worse cuts, and greatly worsen the industrial relations climate at the council. When they’ve finished, there’d be fresh elections and the Conservatives could come back into power.

We didn’t spend two years fighting to kick the Tories out just to have them come back in through the back door.

Bravery and creativity in the crisis

Cleaning workers in the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) at John Lewis stores in London recently won an important victory, when their threat of industrial action secured an immediate and backdated 9% pay increase. An IWW organiser spoke to *Solidarity* about their recent campaigns amongst cleaning workers. This article is abridged from a much longer interview, available online at tinyurl.com/iwwinterview

As well as the John Lewis campaign, the IWW's main priority campaign in London involves cleaners at BMA House, the headquarters of the British Medical Association.

The cleaners here are employed by a subcontractor called Interserve, a major multinational, and being paid minimum wage which is now £6.19 p/h. Their campaign is to win a Living Wage.

There's been a lot of talk in the media and political circles, as Boris Johnson recently announced the new "London Living Wage" rate of £8.55 p/h (£7.45 outside of London) at the Living Wage awards hosted by London Citizens and KPMG. In the same week it was announced that around five million workers (one in five) are not

earning the "bare minimum necessary to live on" — i.e. the Living Wage.

BMA House cleaners have met with Interserve management and requested a meeting with BMA management (which was turned down), and have been holding awareness-raising demonstrations outside the BMA every week. There's been a great reaction to this, including fantastic support from the GMB union who organise BMA employees, as well as from members of the BMA Council.

When it comes to organising, the key is often to find demands that are specific, practical, and winnable enough to campaign around, whilst also mobilising around perhaps vaguer but maybe more deeply-felt ideas of dignity and equality.

Cleaners' struggles are about turning capitalist logic on its head. The economy is fucked, we're in recession, we're all in it together, figures are down this year — blah blah. But the vast majority know that's nonsense from a working-class perspective. The directors' massive pay rises (39% in recent years in some cases!), the increasing gap between rich and poor, the tax avoidance, are all well-known. So for example, at Interserve, the top

dog's pay has increased 11% this year, up to £900,000, and then they're saying it's a tough time, we're all in it together.

The bravery and creativity of our campaigns are important lessons that can be generalised. Bravery is necessary both on the part of organisers and rank-and-file members (a blurred distinction in the IWW). Organisers need to be much braver in terms of how they approach workers.

Proposing direct action isn't something to be done hesitantly. How do you expect workers to be brave and take what is genuinely risky action if you look scared of it yourself?

But it is something to propose. Too often we, organisers, activists, the left, treat workers with kid gloves. We propose all sort of ineffective options mostly on the basis that "the workers aren't up for it" or "everyone is scared", or even "we aren't sure we can win". But I think half the time, when people don't seem up for it, it's because they aren't stupid and they aren't up for that ineffective action we're proposing. Propose the truth. If it'll take a 6-month strike to win, say so. People won't do half measures but if they think you're up front and proposing the action it'll really take to win, they sometimes go for it.

Creativity is important too. Make actions fun, make them communal. Language exchanges, informal education classes, dances... we need to bring back the "union way of life". And stop sounding like the bosses! It's a fine balance to be struck I think between inspiring confi-

dence by appearing professional, knowledgeable, and of course genuinely knowing what you're doing and not getting caught out by regulations, but also really speaking in an accessible way and not mystifying things. Workers need to understand their union and their struggle, or else how can they lead it? Don't patronise, do educate, but don't become "like the enemy".

INVISIBILITY

There are challenges presented by the "invisibility" of cleaners within the wider working class.

Cleaners often have a different employer than the rest of the workers in their workplace or sector, and are often literally "invisible" to their colleagues as they work very early or very late shifts so are not seen or interacted with by other workers.

There are plenty of immigration issues too, including employers directly colluding with the UK Border Agencies to use deportations, or the threat of them, as a tool against organising.

Building industrial strength in an industry based on contracting and subcontracting has been about targeting clients rather than the contractors. Often, the cleaning companies care more about working for that client than the client cares about subcontracting to a particular cleaning company. So putting pressure on the client can put the cleaning company's contract in jeopardy. We've seen some of that client-focused pressure work at John Lewis.

Above all, it's back to good old creative direct ac-

tion. Retailers are obviously very susceptible to demonstrations and blockades — any action that impacts sales. But others, like offices and banks, maybe need different actions, like phone/email blockades or other kinds of economic sabotage. Or maybe it's their own clients and subsidiaries and investors that are the weak points. Whatever it is, find it. Occupations are a big step up, but very effective if you have the strength.

The analogy with the "New Unionism" struggles of the 1880s and 90s has real merits, maybe more than most folks are realising.

The obvious practical lesson is that we need a straightforward, direct-action-focused industrial unionism, which speaks to the experience, levels of education, and languages of our people. Also it's important that this be based in the normal daily lives and cultures of our people, rebuilding a union way of life. Maybe that's the overriding lesson of the "New Unionism" and later industrial syndicalist movements of that time.

But I think there's another side to the New Unionism and the Great Unrest which is often overlooked. Looking back at it, that movement often appears to us as being quite rough-and-ready, and based on a raw militancy and direct-action spirit. But the movement was also intensely modern, futuristic even. Organisations like the IWW, the original Industrial Workers of Great Britain, the Independent Syndicalist Education League, and others, were really breaking with lots of what the left and union movement held to be obvious, and it was controversial.

Right now, I think even — maybe even especially — the radical left are far too conservative, stuck in ideas and traditions that we take for granted without questioning.

• Future issues of *Solidarity* will feature further interviews with cleaning worker activists and organisers, including members of the Industrial Workers of Great Britain.



Teachers' strikes spread

By Ruben Lomas

Teachers' national action over a number of issues, including workload, continues, with the industrial action escalating to strikes in a number of schools.

Teachers at Stratford Academy, where management has imposed a 15% pay cut on workers taking part in action, struck for three days from 13 November, with more strikes on the way. A parents' group has been formed to support the teachers and demand that school management withdraws the pay cut.

At Bishop Challoner school in East London, teachers have voted overwhelmingly to strike against victimisation of National Union of Teachers reps, under threat after they led a successful campaign to stop the headteacher imposing "mock Ofsted" inspections on staff. Strikes may also be on the way at Deptford Green school in Lewisham, Mount Carmel in Islington, and Thomas Tallis in Greenwich. Teachers at Connaught School in Leytonstone are also planning more strikes against the conversion of their school to an Academy, with walkouts planned for 27 and 28 November.

Many of the leading reps and activists from these schools will come together on Saturday 8 December in Leicester for the national conference of the Local Associations Network, a rank-and-file caucus within the NUT the aims to organise workplace activists independently of the union leadership, to force the union to act and to attempt to organise action independently when it won't.

For more information, see the LAN website: nutlan.org.uk

Local Associations National Action Campaign Conference

Saturday 8 December, 11:00am-3:30pm, Leicester Adult Education College, Leicester LE1 6HL.

Speakers include: Steve Charles (Stratford Academy), Karen Wheeler (Deptford Green), and Ruah Carlyle (Bishop Challoner).

More: www.nutlan.org.uk

More industrial news online

• Walmart strikes — bit.ly/WVqKSB

• DWP Contact Centre dispute — bit.ly/USQYRx

• Pret A Manger union busting fight — bit.ly/V4nb6L

• PCS N30 day of action — bit.ly/Srcxba

• Fighting the Ford closures — bit.ly/fordsoton

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

Cleaners' historic strike

Rail cleaners across several lines and contracts will take unprecedented strike action on Thursday 29 November, Friday 30 November, and Saturday 1 December.

The strike, organised by the Rail, Maritime, and Transport workers union

(RMT) is the widest coordination of cleaners' disputes in recent labour movement history.

Cleaners employed by ISS on London Midland, London Underground, and East Coast trains, Carlisle cleaners on First TransPennine Express and the Dock-

lands Light Railway, Initial cleaners on London Underground, and Churchill cleaners on the Tyne and Wear Metro are all striking, demanding living wages, and pensions, sick pay, and travel pass equality with their directly-employed colleagues. Carlisle DLR cleaners will strike on Thursday 29 and Friday 30, with cleaners on other lines striking on Friday and Saturday. Rallies will be held in all major towns affected by the strike, with a London rally taking place at 7pm on Thursday 29 November in Conway Hall.

A London-based solidarity committee is planned to help mobilise for rallies and picket lines, and cleaners in other sectors – such as the Tower of London and Barbican cleaners, organised by the Industrial Workers of Great Britain, and the University of London cleaners, whose "3 Cosas" ("3 Causes") cam-

paigned recently won the backing of their Unison branch after a hard struggle – are discussing coordination with the RMT.

As *Solidarity* went to press, the "3 Cosas" cleaners were due to demonstrate at the University of London's flagship Senate House building on Wednesday 28 November, to coincide with the University's prestigious "Foundation Day" (due to be attended by Princess Anne), and cleaners at the headquarters of the British Medical Association, who are fighting for living wages through their union, the Industrial Workers of the World, were also planning a Wednesday demonstration as part of their ongoing campaign.

Broadcast union BECTU, which organises at the BBC, has also launched a campaign for justice for BBC cleaners.

Anti-EU drive gives leverage to the right

By Chris Reynolds

The posturing, demagoguery, and manoeuvring which could bring Britain stumbling out of the EU are driven by the Tory right wing.

That is no paradox or aberration. Some people still think anti-EUism is a left-wing cause — like the Socialist Party and the leadership of the rail union RMT, who in 2009 ran an electoral coalition named "No2EU". In fact those left-wingers are making themselves helpers for the serious anti-EUers, the Tory right.

Now Tory vice-chair Michael Fabricant has called for a Tory electoral alliance with the far-right anti-EU party UKIP. He comments that yes, many UKIP members are "closet racists", but then so are some Tories, so that's no obstacle.

UKIP leader Nigel Farage has responded that he would back an alliance if the Tories were led by

someone more stridently right-wing, like Michael Gove.

David Cameron does not want a UKIP alliance, but his posturing over cuts in the EU budget and British withdrawal from some EU agreements, and his promise of a referendum on British membership of the EU, give traction to people like Fabricant.

Both right-wing and left-wing supporters of British withdrawal from the EU portray it as a way for Britain to escape the rules and regulations of global capitalism, and prosper separately. That is illusion and demagoguery.

The close economic intertwining of capitalist Europe is driven by the fact of productive forces outgrowing 19th-century or older national frames. It cannot be undone short of a slump so catastrophic as to bring a return to the high economic barriers between nations of the 1930s. Short of that economic col-

lapse, British withdrawal from the EU would mean it adopting a position similar to Norway or Switzerland. Not a huge amount would change.

ECONOMIC

Britain would still comply with the economic rules and regulations of the EU, as Norway and Switzerland do, only it would have no part in negotiations and consultations about them.

Despite the hopes of the Tory right and UKIP, and an almost-certain boost to xenophobia, sober capitalist calculation would probably ensure that EU citizens would remain free to enter and work in Britain. Norway and Switzerland, EU non-members but members of the Schengen area, allow easier entry from EU countries than Britain does now.

Britain would cease to contribute to the EU budget, and lose EU funds

for projects especially in poorer areas.

The EU without Britain would probably then increase its level of integration.

Two substantial factors drive the Tories' anti-EUism. One exists in other EU countries: anti-EUism by small capitalists who can't see beyond their local markets. One is special: British capital has closer links with the USA than does capital in other EU countries, fears that closer integration with the EU could damage its US links, and sees prospects for Britain to operate in relation to Europe as an offshore site with (US-style) lower social overheads and more meagre workers' rights.

British withdrawal, driven by the Tories, would surely unleash a nationalist drive to make Britain a cheaper base for global capital, free of the costs of EU standards.

Ceasefire in Gaza. Protests in Egypt

By Ira Berkovic

The Israeli government and Hamas, the Islamist party that rules in Gaza, are continuing talks over the implementation of the ceasefire deal that ended Israel's recent assault on Gaza.

Over 150 Palestinians, including dozens of children, were killed by Israeli bombing. Six Israelis were killed by rocket fire from paramilitary Islamist groups within Gaza. 29 Israelis were also injured in a bus bombing in Tel Aviv.

During the assault, Israel also stepped up its repression of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, killing two men and arresting over 200 people, many of whom were arrested during demonstrations in solidarity with Gaza. Over 50 of those were arrested on the night of Wednesday 21, the night the ceasefire agreement was initially reached.

The ceasefire is positive, but it necessarily leaves the fundamental power imbalance – Israel as a colonial oppressor, the Palestinians as a subjugated people – entirely intact. For that imbalance to be addressed, a democratic movement of Palestinians and internationalist Israelis is needed, fighting for a settlement that recognises and protects the national rights of both peoples.

Israel — as the vastly more powerful element — is chiefly responsible and accountable for the subjugation of the Palestinians, and the first demand is that it end its occupation and blockade, and support and finance the establishment of a viable Palestinian state.

Mahmoud Abbas, the Fatah/PLO president of the Palestinian Authority (which governs in the West Bank), is seeking to win that state through diplomatic means at the UN. In a surprising move, Hamas (which had previously been hostile to the

statehood bid) have offered their support to Abbas, who takes the bid to the UN General Council on Thursday 29 November.

If Palestine is granted "non-member observer state" status, it may be able to join various international bodies, including the International Criminal Court.

Israel is bitterly opposed to the bid. Following the resignation of Israeli defence minister Ehud Barak on Monday 26 November, far-right racist Avigdor Lieberman (currently the foreign affairs minister) is tipped as a potential candidate for the post, potentially signalling further conflict and war.

MORSI

Many international figures, including Britain's Tory foreign secretary William Hague, have praised the role played by Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood president Mohamed Morsi in helping to broker the ceasefire.

The existence of a government prepared to take a firmer line with Israel than Hosni Mubarak's dictatorship was may have helped stay Benjamin Netanyahu's hand. But socialists should not join in the bourgeois chorus of praise for Morsi's role, nor laud him as a defender of the Palestinians. Our solidarity is with Egypt's democrats, who have taken to the streets against to protest at Morsi's consolidation of power into his own hands, which many say amounts to a coup. An oil worker activist involved in the protests, quoted in the *Daily Telegraph*, said that Morsi's move "gives him more power than a Pharaoh". The Muslim Brotherhood's Cairo headquarters were stormed and occupied as part of the protests.

The British Socialist Workers Party is rightly promoting a statement from its Egyptian section denouncing the Brotherhood as akin to the old regime.

The SWP should reassess its own decision to call for support for the Muslim Brotherhood in the elections, and its claim that the Brotherhood were part of the revolution.